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CHEESE BUYING GUIDE for CONSUMERS

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CONTENTS

	Page
Natural Cheese	4
Making Natural Cheese	4
Care in the Home	5
Uses	6
Ripening Classifications	6
Characteristics of Some Popular Varieties of Natural Cheeses	8
Pasteurized Process Cheese and Related Products	16
Pasteurized Process Cheese	16
Pasteurized Process Cheese Food	16
Pasteurized Process Cheese Spread	16
Coldpack Cheese	17
Coldpack Cheese Food	17
Buying Cheese—What to Look For	17

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CHEESE BUYING GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS

NATURAL CHEESE

Many countries have developed one or more varieties of cheese peculiar to their own conditions and culture.

When the colonists settled in the New World they brought with them their own methods of making their favorite kind of cheese. The first Cheddar Cheese factory in the United States was built by Jesse Williams, near Rome, Oneida County, N.Y., in 1851. As the population increased in the East, and there was a corresponding increase in the demand for market milk, the cheese industry gradually moved westward. Cheesemaking in the United States and in the other leading cheese-producing countries of the world is now largely a factory industry.

Many of the popular varieties, although originating in Europe, are now produced in the United States and are available in most food stores, delicatessens and specialty cheese stores.

MAKING NATURAL CHEESE

The making of natural cheese is an art centuries old. It consists of separating most of the milk solids from the milk by curdling with rennet or bacterial culture or both and separating the curd from the whey by heating, stirring, and pressing. Most cheeses in this country are made from whole milk. For certain types of cheese both milk and cream are used and for other types, skim milk, whey or mixtures of all of these are used.

The distinctive flavor and body and texture characteristics of the various cheeses are due to: (1) the kind of milk used, (2) the method used for curdling the milk and for cutting, cooking, and forming the curd, (3) the type of bacteria or molds used in ripening, (4) the amount of salt or other seasonings added and (5) the conditions of ripening such as temperature, humidity and length of time. Sometimes only minor differences in the procedures followed may make the difference between one variety of cheese and another.

After the cheese has been formed into its characteristic shape it is given a coating of wax or other protective coating or wrapping and allowed to cure or age for varying lengths of time depending upon the kind or variety of cheese being made.

When the cheese has reached its proper curing stage it is often cut or sliced from larger blocks or wheels into more suitable sizes for consumer use. The refrigerated showcase in a modern food market is most en-

ticing with its display of various shapes and sizes of cheese packages such as wedges, oblongs, segments, cubes, slices, blocks and cut portions.

CARE IN THE HOME

All natural cheese should be kept refrigerated. Soft unripened cheeses, such as cottage, cream or Neufchatel, are quite perishable and should be used within a few days after purchase. Ripened or cured cheeses keep well in the refrigerator for several weeks if protected from mold contamination and drying out. When possible the original wrapper or covering should be left on the cheese. The cut surface of cheese should be covered with wax paper, foil, or plastic wrapping material to protect the surface from drying. If large pieces are to be stored for any extended length of time, the cut surface may be dipped in hot paraffin. Small pieces may be completely rewrapped. Mold which may develop on natural cheeses is not harmful, and it is easily scraped or cut from the surface of the cheese. The particular mold in the interior of such cheeses as Blue, Gorganzola, Roquefort or Stilton has been carefully developed to produce the characteristic color and distinctive flavor of those varieties and is consumed as part of the cheese.

Ends or pieces of cheese that have become dried out and hard may be grated and kept refrigerated in a clean, tightly covered glass jar, and used for garnishing or accenting.

Cheese with an aromatic or a strong odor such as Limburger should be stored in a tightly covered jar or container. Such cheeses are fast curing and are best when used within a reasonable time after purchase.

Normally cheese should not be allowed to freeze as this may damage the characteristic body and texture and cause the cheese to become crumbly and mealy. However, small pieces (1 pound or less) not over 1 inch thick of certain varieties may be frozen satisfactorily for as long as 6 months if handled and stored properly. Since it is necessary that the cheese be frozen quickly, the temperature of the freezer should be 0° F. or lower. Cut cheese should be carefully wrapped; foil or other moisture-proof freezer wrapping should be pressed tightly against surfaces to eliminate air, and to prevent evaporation, then frozen immediately. Among the varieties of cheese, which can be successfully frozen in small pieces are: Brick, Cheddar, Edam, Gouda, Muenster, Port du Salut, Swiss, Provolone, Mozzarella, and Camembert. Small sizes as in the case of Camembert can be frozen in their original package. When removed from the freezer, cheese should be thawed in the refrigerator and used as soon as possible after thawing.

Except for soft unripened cheeses such as cottage and cream cheese, all cheese should be served unchilled in order to help bring out its distinctive flavor and texture characteristics. This usually requires 20 minutes to 1 hour or more at room temperature.

USES

Cheese is one of the most nutritious and versatile foods. Because it is an excellent source of many important nutrients in the diet and because it is a well-liked food, cheese is used freely by nutritionists and homemakers in planning meals and in the preparation of many flavorful dishes. With the wide variety of flavors, colors, and consistencies to choose from, natural cheeses are suitable for any meal of the day, from appetizers to desserts, and between-meal snacks as well. Whether served separately or in combination dishes, cheese adds zest and flavor to other foods. There is a cheese to suit every taste, mood or occasion.

Some of the many ways of using different kinds of cheese are as follows:

(a) Main dish in the form of fondue, soufflé, Welsh rabbit, omelet, pizza, or in combination with potatoes, other vegetables, rice, macaroni, noodles or spaghetti.

(b) Salads and salad dressings.

(c) Assorted cheeses on trays with fruit, nuts and crackers or chips.

(d) Appetizers in the form of cut cheese or as spreads and dips.

(e) Sliced in toasted or cold sandwiches or as an ingredient in sandwich spreads and sauces.

(f) Grated as a garnish for soups, sauces and hot dishes.

(g) Desserts, as cheese and crackers, cheese cakes, cheese pies, or fruit pies with cheese.

RIPENING CLASSIFICATIONS

Unripened.—The soft unripened varieties such as cottage cheese, contain relatively high moisture and do not undergo any curing or ripening. They are consumed fresh—soon after manufacture. The firm unripened cheeses such as Gjetost and Mysost also may be used soon after manufacture but because they contain very low moisture may be kept for several weeks or months. (See p. 8.)

Soft Ripened.—In the soft ripened cheeses, curing progresses from the outside or rind of the cheese, towards the center. Particular molds or culture of bacteria or both, which grow on the surface of the cheese aid in developing the characteristic flavor and body and texture during the curing process. Curing continues as long as the temperature is favorable. These cheeses usually contain more moisture than semisoft ripened varieties. (See p. 10.)

Semisoft Ripened.—Unlike the soft ripened varieties, these cheeses ripen from the interior as well as from the surface. This ripening process begins soon after the cheese is formed, with the aid of a characteristic bacterial or mold culture or both. Curing continues as long as the temperature is favorable. These cheeses contain higher moisture than the firm ripened varieties. (See p. 10.)

Firm Ripened.—These cheeses ripen with the aid of a bacterial culture, throughout the entire cheese. Ripening continues as long as the temperature is favorable. The rate and degree of curing is also closely related to the moisture content, therefore, these cheeses, being lower in moisture than the softer varieties, usually require a

longer curing time. (See p. 12.)

Very Hard Ripened.—These cheeses also are cured with the aid of a bacterial culture and enzymes. The rate of curing however is much slower because of the very low moisture and higher salt content. (See p. 14.)

Blue-Vein Mold Ripened.—Curing is accomplished by the aid of bacteria but more particularly by the use of a characteristic mold culture that grows throughout the interior of the cheese to produce the familiar appearance and characteristic flavor. (See p. 14.)

In order that consumers might better familiarize themselves with some of the more popular and generally available varieties of natural cheese, their general classification, principal characteristics and some of their uses are shown in the following charts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME POPULAR

Kind or name	Place of origin	Kind of milk used in manufacture	Ripening or curing time	Flavor
SOFT, UNRIPENED VARIETIES:				
Cottage, plain or creamed.	Unknown	Cow's milk skimmed; plain curd, or plain curd with cream added.	Unripened	Mild, acid
Cream, plain	U.S.A.	Cream from cow's milk.	Unripened	Mild, acid
Neufchatel (Nû-shä-tĕl′).	France	Cow's milk	Unripened	Mild, acid
Ricotta (Rĭ-cō′-ta)	Italy	Cow's milk, whole or partly skimmed, or whey from cow's milk with whole or skim milk added. In Italy, whey from sheep's milk.	Unripened	Sweet, nut-like.
FIRM, UNRIPENED VARIETIES:				
Gjetost, [1] (Yēt′ôst).	Norway	Whey from goat's milk or a mixture of whey from goat's and cow's milk.	Unripened	Sweetish, caramel.
Mysost (Müs-ôst) also called Primost (Prēm′-ôst).	Norway	Whey from cow's milk.	Unripened	Sweetish, caramel.
Mozzarella (Mō-tsa-rel′la) also called Scamorza.	Italy	Whole or partly skimmed cow's milk. In Italy, originally made from buffalo's milk.	Unripened	Delicate, mild.

See footnotes at end of table.

VARIETIES OF NATURAL CHEESES

Body and texture	Color	Retail packaging	Uses
(See p. 6 for explanation)			
Soft, curd particles of varying size.	White to creamy white.	Cup-shaped containers, tumblers, dishes.	Salads, with fruits, vegetables, sandwiches, dips, cheese cake.
Soft and smooth	White	3- to 8-oz. packages.	Salads, dips, sandwiches, snacks, cheese cake, desserts.
Soft, smooth similar to cream cheese but lower in milkfat.	White	4- to 8-oz. packages.	Salads, dips, sandwiches, snacks, cheese cake, desserts.
Soft, moist or dry.	White	Pint and quart paper and plastic containers, 3 lb. metal cans.	Appetizers, salads, snacks, lasagne, ravioli, noodles and other cooked dishes, grating, desserts.
(See p. 6 for explanation)			
Firm, buttery consistency.	Golden brown	Cubical and rectangular.	Snacks, desserts, served with dark breads, crackers, biscuits or muffins.
Firm, buttery consistency.	Light brown	Cubical, cylindrical, pie-shaped wedges.	Snacks, desserts, served with dark breads.
Slightly firm, plastic.	Creamy white	Small round or braided form, shredded, sliced.	Snacks, toasted sandwiches, cheeseburgers, cooking, as in meat loaf, or topping for lasagne, pizza, and casseroles.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME POPULAR

Kind or name	Place of origin	Kind of milk used in manufacture	Ripening or curing time	Flavor
SOFT, RIPENED VARIETIES:				
Brie (Brē)	France	Cow's milk	4 to 8 weeks.	Mild to pungent.
Camembert (Kăm'ĕm-bâr).	France	Cow's milk	4 to 8 weeks.	Mild to pungent.
Limburger	Belgium	Cow's milk	4 to 8 weeks.	Highly pungent, very strong.
SEMISOFT, RIPENED VARIETIES:				
Bel Paese [2] (Bĕl Pă-ā'-zĕ).	Italy	Cow's milk	6 to 8 weeks.	Mild to moderately robust.
Brick	U.S.A.	Cow's milk	2 to 4 months.	Mild to moderately sharp.
Muenster (Mün' stẽr).	Germany	Cow's milk	1 to 8 weeks.	Mild to mellow.
Port du Salut (Por dü Sȧ-lü').	France	Cow's milk	6 to 8 weeks.	Mellow to robust.

See footnotes at end of table.

VARIETIES OF NATURAL CHEESES—Continued

Body and texture	Color	Retail packaging	Uses
(See p. 6 for explanation)			
Soft, smooth when ripened.	Creamy yellow interior; edible thin brown and white crust.	Circular, pie-shaped wedges.	Appetizers, sandwiches, snacks, good with crackers and fruit, dessert.
Soft, smooth; very soft when fully ripened.	Creamy yellow interior; edible thin white, or gray-white crust.	Small circular cakes and pie-shaped portions.	Appetizers, sandwiches, snacks, good with crackers, and fruit such as pears and apples, dessert.
Soft, smooth when ripened; usually contains small irregular openings.	Creamy white interior; reddish yellow surface.	Cubical, rectangular.	Appetizers, snacks, good with crackers, rye or other dark breads, dessert.
(See p. 6 for explanation)			
Soft to medium firm, creamy.	Creamy yellow interior; slightly gray or brownish surface sometimes covered with yellow wax coating.	Small wheels, wedges, segments.	Appetizers, good with crackers, snacks, sandwiches, dessert.
Semisoft to medium firm, elastic, numerous small mechanical openings.	Creamy yellow..	Loaf, brick, slices, cut portions.	Appetizers, sandwiches, snacks, dessert.
Semisoft, numerous small mechanical openings. Contains more moisture than brick.	Creamy white interior; yellow tan surface.	Circular cake, blocks, wedges, segments, slices.	Appetizers, sandwiches, snacks, dessert.
Semisoft, smooth, buttery, small openings.	Creamy yellow..	Wheels and wedges.	Appetizers, snacks, served with raw fruit, dessert.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME POPULAR

Kind or name	Place of origin	Kind of milk used in manufacture	Ripening or curing time	Flavor
FIRM RIPENED VARIETIES:				
Cheddar	England	Cow's milk	1 to 12 months or more.	Mild to very sharp.
Colby	U.S.A.	Cow's milk	1 to 3 months.	Mild to mellow.
Caciocavallo (Kä′chō̇-kä-val′lō̇).	Italy	Cow's milk. In Italy, cow's milk or mixtures of sheep's, goat's, and cow's milk.	3 to 12 months.	Piquant, similar to Provolone but not smoked.
Ēdam (Ē′dăm)	Netherlands.	Cow's milk, partly skimmed.	2 to 3 months.	Mellow, nutlike.
Gouda (Gou′-dá)	Netherlands.	Cow's milk, whole or partly skimmed.	2 to 6 months.	Mellow, nutlike.
Provolone (Prō-vō-lō′-nĕ) also smaller sizes and shapes called Provolette, Provoloncini.	Italy	Cow's milk	2 to 12 months or more	Mellow to sharp, smoky, salty.
Swiss, also called Emmentaler.	Switzerland	Cow's milk	3 to 9 months.	Sweet, nutlike.

VARIETIES OF NATURAL CHEESES—Continued

Body and texture	Color	Retail packaging	Uses
(See p. 6 for explanation)			
Firm, smooth, some mechanical openings.	White to medium-yellow-orange.	Circular, cylindrical loaf, pie-shaped wedges, oblongs, slices, cubes, shredded, grated.	Appetizers, sandwiches, sauces, on vegetables, in hot dishes, toasted sandwiches, grating, cheeseburgers, dessert.
Softer and more open than Cheddar.	White to medium-yellow-orange.	Cylindrical, pie-shaped wedges.	Sandwiches, snacks, cheeseburgers.
Firm, lower in milkfat and moisture than Provolone.	Light or white interior; clay or tan colored surface.	Spindle or ten-pin shaped, bound with cord, cut pieces.	Snacks, sandwiches, cooking, dessert; suitable for grating after prolonged curing.
Semisoft to firm, smooth; small irregularly shaped or round holes; lower milkfat than Gouda.	Creamy yellow or medium yellow-orange interior; surface coated with red wax.	Cannon ball shaped loaf, cut pieces, oblongs.	Appetizers, snacks, salads, sandwiches, seafood sauces, dessert.
Semisoft to firm, smooth; small irregularly shaped or round holes; higher milk fat than Edam.	Creamy yellow or medium yellow-orange interior; may or may not have red wax coating.	Ball shaped with flattened top and bottom.	Appetizers, snacks, salads, sandwiches, seafood sauces, dessert.
Firm, smooth----	Light creamy interior; light brown or golden yellow surface.	Pear shaped, sausage and salami shaped, wedges, slices.	Appetizers, sandwiches, snacks, souffle, macaroni and spaghetti dishes, pizza, suitable for grating when fully cured and dried.
Firm, smooth with large round eyes.	Light yellow----	Segments, pieces, slices.	Sandwiches, snacks, sauces, fondue, cheeseburgers.

Kind or name	Place of origin	Kind of milk used in manufacture	Ripening or curing time	Flavor
VERY HARD, RIPENED VARIETIES:				
Parmesan (Păr mē-zăn) also called Reggiano.	Italy	Partly skimmed cow's milk.	14 months to 2 years.	Sharp, piquant.
Romano (Rō-mā'-nō) also called Sardo Romano Pecorino Romano.	Italy	Cow's milk. In Italy, sheep's milk (Italian law).	5 to 12 months.	Sharp, piquant.
Sap Sago [1] (Săp'-să-gō).	Switzerland	Skimmed cow's milk.	5 months or more.	Sharp, pungent cloverlike.
BLUE-VEIN MOLD RIPENED VARIETIES:				
Blue, spelled Bleu on imported cheese.	France	Cow's milk. In France, cow's milk or sheep's milk or mixtures of these.	2 to 6 months.	Tangy, peppery.
Gorgonzola (Gôr-gŏn-zō'-là).	Italy	Cow's milk. In Italy, cow's milk or goat's milk or mixtures of these.	3 to 12 months.	Tangy, peppery.
Roquefort [1] (Rōk'-fērt) or (Rôk-fôr').	France	Sheep's milk	2 to 5 months or more.	Sharp, slightly peppery.
Stilton [1]	England	Cow's milk	2 to 6 months.	Piquant, milder than Gorgonzola or Roquefort.

[1] Imported only.

VARIETIES OF NATURAL CHEESES—Continued

Body and texture	Color	Retail packaging	Uses
(See p. 7 for explanation)			
Very hard, granular, lower moisture and milkfat than Romano.	Creamy white---	Cylindrical, wedges, shredded, grated.	Grated for seasoning in soups, or vegetables, spaghetti, ravioli, breads, popcorn, used extensively in pizza and lasagne.
Very hard granular.	Yellowish-white interior, greenish-black surface.	Round with flat ends, wedges, shredded, grated.	Seasoning in soups, casserole dishes, ravioli, sauces, breads, suitable for grating when cured for about one year.
Very hard-------	Light green by addition of dried, powdered clover leaves.	Conical, shakers---	Grated to flavor soups, meats, macaroni, spaghetti, hot vegetables; mixed with butter makes a good spread on crackers or bread.
(See p. 7 for explanation)			
Semisoft, pasty, sometimes crumbly.	White interior, marbled or streaked with blue veins of mold.	Cylindrical, wedges, oblongs, squares, cut portions.	Appetizers, salads, dips, salad dressing, sandwich spreads, good with crackers, dessert.
Semisoft, pasty, sometimes crumbly, lower moisture than Blue.	Creamy white interior, mottled or streaked with blue-green veins of mold. Clay colored surface.	Cylindrical, wedges, oblongs.	Appetizers, snacks, salads, dips, sandwich spread, good with crackers, dessert.
Semisoft, pasty, sometimes crumbly.	White or creamy white interior, marbled or streaked with blue veins of mold.	Cylindrical, wedges.	Appetizers, snacks, salads, dips, sandwich spreads, good with crackers, dessert.
Semisoft, flaky; slightly more crumbly than Blue.	Creamy white interior, marbled or streaked with blue-green veins of mold.	Circular, wedges, oblongs.	Appetizers, snacks, salads, dessert.

[2] Italian trademark—licensed for manufacture in U.S.A.; also imported.

PASTEURIZED PROCESS CHEESE

Pasteurized process cheese is a blend of fresh and aged natural cheeses which have been shredded, mixed and heated (pasteurized), after which no further ripening occurs. It melts easily when reheated. The blend may consist of one or two or more varieties of natural cheese and may contain pimentos, fruits, vegetables, or meats. Smoked cheese or smoke flavor may also be added.

The flavor of pasteurized process cheese depends largely upon the flavor of the cheese used which may be modified by flavoring materials added. Pasteurized Gruyere cheese has a nut-sweet flavor, somewhat similar to Swiss.

Some other available varieties are: Pasteurized process American cheese, pasteurized process Swiss cheese, pasteurized process Swiss cheese blended with American, and pasteurized process Brick cheese.

Process cheese is packaged in slices, ½-, 1- and 2-pound loaves and cut portions.

It may be used in main dishes, for snacks, cheeseburgers, with cold cuts and salads, grilled or toasted sandwiches, numerous sandwich combinations and in casseroles.

PASTEURIZED PROCESS CHEESE FOOD

Pasteurized process cheese food is prepared in much the same manner as process cheese except that it contains less cheese, with nonfat dry milk, or whey solids and water added. This results in a lower milk fat content and more moisture than in process cheese. Pasteurized process cheese food also may contain pimentos, fruits, vegetables or meats or may have a smoked flavor.

Cheese food is milder in flavor, has a softer texture, spreads more easily and melts quicker than process cheese due to the higher moisture.

The most popular variety is pasteurized process American cheese food and is packaged in slices, rolls, links and loaves.

It may be used in any place where process cheese is used though it is not likely to add as much cheese flavor.

PASTEURIZED PROCESS CHEESE SPREAD

Pasteurized process cheese spread is made in much the same manner as pasteurized process cheese food but generally contains higher moisture, and the milk fat content is usually lower. A stabilizer is used in the preparation of this product to prevent separation of ingredients. It is normally more spreadable than cheese food. Cheese spread also may contain pimentos, fruits, vegetables, meats or may have a smoked flavor.

The flavor of pasteurized process cheese spread depends largely upon the flavor of the cheese used which may be modified by flavoring materials added.

Some available varieties are: Pasteurized process American cheese spread, pasteurized process pimento cheese spread, pasteurized process pineapple cheese spread and

pasteurized process Blue cheese spread.

They are packaged in jars and loaves convenient for use as snacks, in stuffing celery stalks, and in deviled egg, noodle casseroles, meat balls, hot vegetables, sandwiches, sauces and dressings.

COLDPACK CHEESE

Coldpack cheese or Club cheese is a blend of the same or two or more varieties of fresh and aged natural cheese, as in process cheese, except that the cheese is mixed into a uniform product without heating. It may have a smoked flavor.

The principal varieties are coldpack American cheese and cold pack Swiss cheese.

The flavor is the same as the nattural cheese used and usually is aged or sharp. The body is softer and spreads easily.

Coldpack cheese is packed in jars, rolls or links and is especially good as appetizers, snacks and desserts.

COLDPACK CHEESE FOOD

Coldpack cheese food is prepared in the same manner as Coldpack cheese but includes other dairy ingredients as used in process cheese food. In addition, sweetening agents such as sugar and corn sirup may be added.

Coldpack cheese food may contain pimentos, fruits, vegetables, meats or may have a smoked flavor.

The flavor resembles the cheese from which it is made but is milder, softer and spreads more easily due to the other ingredients added and the higher moisture content.

It is packaged in the same way as Coldpack cheese and may be served in the same manner.

BUYING CHEESE—WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The labels of natural cheese, pasteurized process cheese, and related products carry important descriptive information. The name of a natural cheese will appear as the variety such as "Cheddar cheese", "Swiss cheese", or "Blue cheese."

Pasteurized process cheese labels will always include the words "pasteurized process", together with the name of the variety or varieties of cheese used, for instance, "pasteurized process American cheese" or "pasteurized process Swiss and American cheese".

Cheese food also contains ingredients other than cheese and therefore is labeled as "pasteurized process cheese food". Cheese spreads have a different composition from cheese foods and are labeled as "process pasteurized cheese spread". All the ingredients used in the preparation of these products are listed on the respective label along with the kinds or varieties of cheese used in the mixture. Also the milkfat and moisture content may be shown.

Coldpack cheese and coldpack cheese food, are labeled in the same manner as other cheese and cheese foods except that "club cheese" or "Comminuted cheese" may be substituted for the name "coldpack cheese".

A very important bit of information on the label of certain varieties of natural cheese pertains to the age or degree of curing. For instance, Cheddar cheese may be labeled as "mild", "medium", or "mellow", or "aged" or "sharp". In some cases pasteurized process cheese may be labeled to indicate a sharp flavor when a much higher proportion of sharp or aged cheese was used in its preparation.

Thus it is quite apparent that there are significant differences between natural cheeses and different kinds of process cheese and related products. Differences in the ingredients used, milk fat content, and moisture content show the importance of reading the labels carefully.

Look for the name of the article. Do not confuse the brand name with the name of the cheese. For some purposes you may want natural cheese, for others process cheese or cheese food, and for still others pasteurized process cheese spread or coldpack cheese may best serve your needs. In many cases they may be packaged alike but the names on the labels will be different.

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Growth Through Agricultural Progress

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